
The Adult's Revenge

The once burgeoning video-game industry, having saturated the adolescent male market, is hoping to sell its products to new customers—namely, adults. The first wave of “adult” video games has recently appeared, and these offerings are, to no one’s surprise, pornographic. American Multiple Industries (AMI) now offers games with titles like “Bachelor Party” and “Beat ‘Em and Eat ‘Em.” As AMI spokesman Mark Harris admits, “We do not want the under-21 share.”

Perhaps the most notorious of these

games is “Custer’s Revenge.” The object is to advance a naked “Custer” across a field, dodging flying arrows, so that Custer can—according to AMI’s press release—“even up an old score with a hog-tied ravishing Indian maiden.” With every successful conquest of the woman, the game becomes more challenging.

Though Harris claims that the sex act is between “two consenting video images with the woman actively participating,” many women and Native American groups insist that the game portrays a rape. The various groups describe the game as a new kind of pornography, in which the player is no longer a passive observer but the actual instigator of a violent deed.

But “Custer’s Revenge” is just the tip of an iceberg designed to attract the adult buyer and allow upstart firms like AMI to make inroads against the giant of the video industry, Atari.

And it is technology and innovation that have become the name of the game. Innovation stimulates consumer enthusiasm and develops new markets, all of which translates directly into higher corporate profits. Among the new technologies being tested are three-dimensional video images, voice synthesis, video-disc components, and holography—the harnessing of laser-beam images. All are designed to provide the home player with greater realism. The video-game industry has also branched out into cable television, further expanding its potential markets. One fledgling service, PlayCable, already offers 20 Intellivision games.

And Atari, as Harris puts it, “is feeling the crunch. It’s like the automobile industry. The problem GM had with the Japanese, Atari is having with us and companies like Activision. Smaller companies are coming in with superior products for less money.”

But Atari is laying plans to recapture the market it has until recently regarded as its own fiefdom. The company has initiated lawsuits against Coleco for patent infringement, Imagic for copyright violation, and AMI for illegally using the Atari name and logo, all of which leaves the impression within the industry that being a competitor means meeting Atari in court. Atari is also trying to match its competitors’ technological improvements. The company is closemouthed about its doings, but other firms expect it to develop new games with 3-D and holography—and without sex.

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